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Items for information: international merchandise trade statistics

Report of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics**

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session,*** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith to the Commission, for informational purposes, the report of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics. The Commission is requested to take note of the work of the Task Force, in particular its endorsement of the provisional draft of the fourth revision of the Standard International Trade Classification.

* E/CN.3/2006/1.

** Prepared by the World Trade Organization (convener). In 2003, the Task Force on International Trade Statistics decided to change its name to Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics to distinguish itself from the inter-agency Task Force on Statistics of International Trade in Services convened by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

*** *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4* (E/2005/24), chap. VII, para. 6 (a).

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Report of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics

I. Follow-up to action taken by the Commission

1. The Statistical Commission addressed issues of international merchandise trade statistics at its thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth sessions.

2. At its thirty-fourth session, the Commission endorsed the plans of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics to develop a Manual on Export and Import Price Indices, under the aegis of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).[1] This Manual is being prepared by a Technical Expert Group within the Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics. At the time of the writing of the present report, 13 draft chapters had been prepared and were available for comments on an IMF electronic forum. IMF informed the Task Force that the final draft was planned for completion by the end of 2005. While the electronic forum provides the possibility for all to comment on the Manual, on an individual basis, the Task Force is aiming to organize adequate outreach activities in order to actively involve national experts. IMF is looking into the possibility of funding an expert meeting. (See the annex to this report for a summary of the activities of the Task Force, both completed and ongoing.)

3. At its thirty-fifth session, the Statistical Commission had approved the Task Force's recommendation to prepare a fourth revision of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC),[2] which should take into account the accumulated revisions in the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System (HS), since the implementation of the third revision of SITC.[3] The United Nations Statistics Division prepared a provisional draft of SITC, Rev.4, which was reviewed and endorsed by the Task Force. It recommends SITC, Rev.4, for use in the analysis of international merchandise trade by interested countries and international organizations. The provisional draft of SITC, Rev.4, is available as a room paper under the same title.

II. Other activities undertaken since the thirty-fourth session of the Commission

A. Methodology

4. *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual* (Compilers Manual)[4] was released in 2004. The Task Force had contributed to the preparation of this companion document to the second revision of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions*,[5] published in 1998. A supplement to the *Compilers Manual*, providing additional guidance and clarification on issues of common concern, is planned for 2007. Topics to be treated in this publication are currently under discussion.

5. The Task Force has also been closely following the revision process of the fifth edition of the *Balance of Payments Manual*,[6] focusing on chapter 9 (Goods and Services Account). A common position had been expressed to IMF in favour of *Balance of Payments Manual* guidelines' remaining as consistent as possible with

those of the second revision of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions* concerning the gross recording of goods for processing, inclusion of re-exports (with separate identification), and the treatment of merchanting. The Task Force reinforced its position in a second joint paper to IMF in June 2005, highlighting important implications of a changed treatment of goods for processing on both data collection and data analysis.

6. *Statistical Territories of the World for Use in International Merchandise Trade Statistics*[7] is available as a publication and also online through the Internet. The Statistics Division will update the publication once sufficient new or modified information becomes available (for example, on customs unions). To that end, the Statistics Division has included questions on the statistical territory in its methodological questionnaires that serve to update countries' national compilation and dissemination practices.

7. The Task Force also discussed the harmonization of geo-nomenclatures and country groupings for economic and geographical zones between organizations. The 2004 European Union (EU) enlargement stimulated useful exchanges of information but full harmonization was considered difficult. It appears more easily achievable to agree on unique denominations for identical country groups of various organizations. As such harmonization would impact various statistical domains, the Task Force is of the opinion that this should be dealt with at a higher level.

B. Databases on international trade: international data production and dissemination

8. The objective of the Task Force is centred on the improvement of the efficiency, quality and consistency of international data production and dissemination, while reducing the national authorities' response burden and avoiding duplication of work in international organizations.

9. Through well-functioning cooperation among organizations, considerable results have been achieved in recent years. They can be grouped as follows:

- Participation of all international organizations in the improvement of the United Nations Commodity Trade Statistics Database (UN Comtrade), as a central repository of international merchandise trade statistics, in particular the data-sharing arrangement between the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Statistics Division for detailed trade data and the recent Joint United Nations/OECD System for collection and processing of international merchandise trade statistics (see E/CN.3/2006/24).
- Development of the inter-agency Common Data Set (CDS) on total merchandise exports and imports by country.
- Improvement in data dissemination tools and formats.
- Improvement in related metadata and data quality.

UN Comtrade

10. The international community needs easy access to timely trade data. Using UN Comtrade as a single repository for such data therefore produces certain

repercussions in the case of non-availability of those data or late reporting. Through joint statements, international organizations have highlighted this on several occasions.

11. To improve the coverage, the discussions of the Task Force advanced a number of initiatives which can be summarized as follows:

- Pursuant to the OECD/Statistics Division memorandum of understanding on shared data collection and, more recently, on joint data processing, OECD now shares detailed merchandise trade data for all its member countries with the Statistics Division and both organizations are engaged in the joint processing of those data (see E/CN.3/2006/24).
- As is the case for virtually all other international organizations, the UN Comtrade series for the EU aggregate are sourced directly from Eurostat.
- The regional commissions and other organizations, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), contribute to the collection of annual trade data files.
- In addition, technical cooperation activities organized by the Statistics Division and also the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) have considerably helped to improve country coverage, especially for African countries over the last three years.

The Common Data Set

12. The Common Data Set (CDS) on total merchandise exports and imports by country, developed through a joint data ownership with shared responsibilities, was launched in 2001. Since then, the organizations have agreed on each organization's responsibilities for data collection and provision, and have compiled the data set for all countries. The World Trade Organization acted as a clearing house and organized the reconciliation of the data among different participating organizations. Statistical metadata were added and the Common Data Set now comprises reconciled data from 1995 to 2004.

13. While the reconciliation exercise will be a continuing effort, the Task Force decided that the data could now be disseminated through its website. The Common Data Set is presented according to two layers displaying, on the one hand, officially reported data and, on the other hand, adjusted and estimated data. The modus operandi for maintaining the Common Data Set will be made available on the Internet to provide users with the necessary transparency on the production of the Data Set. As a first step, it will be disseminated in the form of downloadable excel worksheets until a specific database application is developed for this purpose.

14. A noteworthy development along with the progress of the Common Data Set concerns Statistics Division databases. Apart from UN Comtrade, the Statistics Division also maintains a series on total merchandise exports and imports within its *Monthly Bulletin of Statistics* database, which are sourced from the IMF *International Financial Statistics* and national publications. The fact that annual totals may differ between the two Statistics Division databases creates confusion for users. The Statistics Division is planning to align the databases for purposes of consistency, taking into account ongoing cooperation with OECD and collaboration

within the Common Data Set project, in which the Statistics Division is responsible for some 64 countries or areas.

Data dissemination tools and formats

15. International organizations have substantially improved their online dissemination systems over the last years. Examples include the UN Comtrade Internet version, and online analytical tools developed by the World Bank and the International Trade Centre (ITC). Other organizations such as FAO, OECD and the World Trade Organization revamped their statistics gateways to implement new online database applications.

16. Considerable results have also been achieved on adding value to the dissemination of trade statistics by combining them with other analytically useful information, in the form of trade indicators. The World Trade Organization is now disseminating trade profiles of economies combining trade flows with trade policy information sourced from within the World Trade Organization and other organizations; and OECD has developed a prototype on trade indicators (trade plus production, employment, investment, etc.) linking standardized information from various OECD databases to trade data.

17. On the technical side, the Statistics Division developed web services for data transfers by applying Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standards. The United Nations/Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), for example, developed an online interface that allows users to define and save queries for which processing is then carried out in the background on the UN Comtrade server. Other organizations, such as the World Bank, copy the whole database to input it into their own applications. The World Trade Organization downloads data on its server and uses specific processing tools for the preparation of its annual trade statistics.

Statistical metadata and data quality

18. In the context of these developments, combined with ever-increasing data sharing and processing agreements, the Task Force felt the need to address the organizations' data dissemination policies and data quality frameworks. The implementation of common standard metadata structures has been identified as an important objective. Useful exchanges of information took place within the Task Force on the organizations' practices with respect to data quality and metadata management.

19. IMF informed the Task Force of the implementation and use of its Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF) as a tool for surveillance and technical assistance, and for structuring metadata for IMF dissemination standards (the General Data Dissemination System (GDDS) and the Special Data Dissemination Standard (SDDS)). The Statistics Division is investigating possible linkage of DQAF with its questionnaire on countries' compliance with the second revision of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Concepts and Definitions*. OECD reported on its positive experiences in implementing a Quality Framework that included reviews of its services by peers, producers and users, and stressed the importance of metadata within this Framework. OECD also presented its MetaStore, a system designed to process metadata along with their data quality framework, which should be applied to all OECD statistical domains. The Task Force members

expressed their interest in this metadata management system and are exploring the adaptation of this system in their environments. For example, IMF is evaluating whether the MetaStore computer system could fully accommodate its DQAF/dissemination standards metadata model.

20. Finally, an important achievement concerning statistical metadata was the release, in 2005, of the results of the Statistics Division survey on *National Practices in Compilation and Dissemination of External Trade Index Numbers: A Technical Report*.[8]

C. Technical assistance

21. The Task Force website will include information on technical assistance activities and link up with the organizations' websites on the issue. Technical assistance activities include, among others, a regional workshop on the *Compilers Manual* organized by the Statistics Division and the provision by Eurostat of technical assistance in the framework of EU enlargement, the EU-Mediterranean agreement, the Cotonou agreement and regional cooperation agreements such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and l'Union Économique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine. It was agreed that the Statistics Division should coordinate technical assistance in trade statistics focusing on methodology and implementation.

22. A new approach to regional workshops that proved successful for improving the quality and availability of trade statistics has been to link the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), the Eurostat Eurotrace and Statistics Division expertise on concepts and definitions, and to implement this approach with national experts from both national statistical authorities and customs organizations. This kind of regional workshop set-up will continue in the future.

D. The Task Force website

23. To enhance transparency and improve outreach, the Task Force, at its 2005 meeting held in Bangkok, decided to create a website of its own. The website will not only host the Common Data Set, but also serve as an entry portal to Task Force member organizations' merchandise trade databases and to existing methodological publications containing applicable concepts, definitions and classifications.

III. New issues and related future activities

24. The intensifying globalization of the world economy, changing commercial and administrative practices associated with international flows of goods, and revision of related statistical frameworks, such as the System of National Accounts, the Balance of Payments Manual and the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services, have repercussions on international merchandise trade statistics. The Task Force is considering them in terms of general methodology and recommended data compilation practices. The new issues include the linkage of trade and business registers, reviewing data-collection procedures for a number of goods categories

(for example, goods for processing), developing further recommendations for data collection in cases where customs records do not exist or are not adequate for statistical purposes, the measurement of intra-trade in regional trade agreements, or of intra-firm trade (multinational enterprises), etc.

25. The individual members of the Task Force, as well as the Task Force as a whole, took note of those new developments and initiated, or plan to initiate, forward-looking activities in the following areas:

- *Reconciliation of balance-of-payments and foreign trade statistics.* Eurostat published a study entitled *Differences between Balance of Payments and Foreign Trade Statistics*.[9] This helps to better focus on the conceptual differences in those two statistical systems and their reflection in compiled data.

- *Structural business and trade statistics.* OECD, at its Sixth International Trade Statistics Expert Meeting, held in Paris from 12 to 14 September 2005, examined the linkages between the two statistical systems to derive new statistical products, such as indicators combining trade statistics with enterprise-related criteria (for example, by size class) and estimates of intra-firm trade.

- *Review of country compilation and reporting practices.* In 2006, the Statistics Division will conduct a comprehensive review of country practices in compilation and reporting of international merchandise trade statistics in order to assess their compliance with the current recommendations of the Statistical Commission. The results of this review, together with the analysis of developments described in paragraph 24 above, will allow the Statistics Division and the Task Force to evaluate the scope of the necessary revisions to the existing recommendations. A corresponding action plan will be developed and submitted to the Commission at its thirty-ninth session (March 2008).

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2003, Supplement No. 4* (E/2003/24), chap. III, para. 12 (b) and (c).

[2] Ibid., *2004, Supplement No. 4* (E/2004/24 and Corr.1), chap. V, para 4 (i).

[3] Statistical Papers, No. 34/Rev.3 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.86.XVII.12 and Corr.1 and 2).

[4] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.02.XVII.17.

[5] Studies in Methods, No. 52, Rev.2 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.98.XVII.16).

[6] Washington, D.C., IMF, 1993.

[7] Studies in Methods, No. 30, Rev.3 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.XVII.8).

[8] Statistical Papers, No. 86 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.04.XVII.10).

[9] Luxembourg, European Communities, 2004.

Annex

Summary of the activities of the Task Force on International Merchandise Trade Statistics (completed and ongoing) during the three-year period under review

Achievements

Activity	Completed
• Publication of *International Merchandise Trade Statistics: Compilers Manual*	2004
• Publication of *National Practices in Compilation and Dissemination of External Trade Index Numbers: A Technical Report*	2005

Ongoing activities

Activity	Envisaged completion
Methodology	
• Production of a supplement to the Compilers Manual	2007
• Follow-up/feedback on revision of the Balance of Payments Manual and the System of National Accounts	Ongoing
• Organization of outreach activities on the *Manual on Export and Import Price Indices*	End-2006
• Updating of *Statistical Territories of the World for Use in International Merchandise Trade Statistics*	Ongoing
Classifications	
• Preparation of the Standard International Trade Classification, Rev.4	2006
Databases on international trade	
• Improvement of UN Comtrade database (for example, OECD/Statistics Division cooperation)	2006
• Dissemination of the Common Data Set	Early 2006
Other	
• Public release of the Task Force website	Early 2006
• Technical assistance activities	Ongoing

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Items for information: informal sector statistics

Report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session,** the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, which is presented to the Commission for information. The Commission is requested to take note of the report of the Group.

* E/CN.3/2006/1.

** See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4* (E/2005/24), chap. I.B.

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Report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics

1. The previous report of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics (E/CN.3/2005/10) indicating the purpose of the setting up of the Group, the participating countries, meetings held up to February 2004, topics considered in those meetings, achievements of the Group, and activities planned for the future, was submitted to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session in March 2005. Subsequently, the eighth meeting of the Group was held, from 29 to 31 March 2005 in Nadi, Fiji.

2. Technical issues considered in the eighth meeting included:

(a) Operationalization of the conceptual framework of informal employment and the informal economy;

(b) Indicators on informal sector and informal employment;

(c) Measuring the linkages between poverty and informal employment;

(d) Interregional programme of technical cooperation on the measurement of the informal sector and informal employment;

(e) Methods of evaluation of data quality of surveys on the informal sector and informal employment;

(f) Survey methods and questions for identifying status in employment categories and the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), Rev.4.

Participants at the eighth meeting

3. The meeting was attended by representatives from Fiji, India and Namibia, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the institution Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

Summary of recommendations of the eighth meeting

4. The following action was taken during the eighth meeting:

(a) The Delhi Group noted that there had been significant developments in the operationalization of definitions and the conceptual framework of the informal sector and informal employment surveys since the last meeting of the Group held from 2 to 4 February 2004 in New Delhi. These included (i) Namibia's initiative to carry out a full-fledged survey of the informal sector and to introduce some questions on informal employment in the labour-force surveys, (ii) the initiative of India to introduce a module on informal employment in the labour-force survey undertaken from July 2004 to June 2005 and (iii) the efforts made by Fiji to estimate the contribution of the informal sector to its economy. The Group recommended that such efforts be made by more countries, that the methodologies available for estimating the contribution of the informal sector to gross domestic product (GDP) needed be consolidated, and that the experiences gained in using the methodology be documented;

(b) The Delhi Group welcomed the initiative of ILO to collect data on employment in the informal sector and on informal employment according to the framework developed by the Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians and encouraged countries to cooperate in completing this data-collection exercise;

(c) The Delhi Group welcomed the development of a framework at the international level including informal employment as an indicator with respect to monitoring progress relating to Millennium Development Goal 3 encompassing equality and employment of women;

(d) Keeping in view the resolutions and guidelines on informal sector employment adopted by the Fifteenth and Seventeenth International Conferences of Labour Statisticians and the various recommendations made at previous meetings of the Delhi Group on the same subject, the Group recommended that a minimum tabulation plan and set of indicators, arising out of surveys on the informal sector and informal employment, be formulated by ILO and other members of the Group for consideration in a future meeting of the Group;

(e) The Delhi Group noted with interest the effort by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing to develop statistics on earnings from self-employment and on the working poor and recommended that the concepts and calculation methods be explained in detail in view of the complexity of the concepts involved;

(f) The Delhi Group noted with interest the studies undertaken by some of the countries for analysing poverty in relation to informal sector employment and recommended that other countries should be encouraged to undertake such studies;

(g) The Delhi Group welcomed the initiative taken by ESCAP in formulating a project to strengthen statistics of informal sector employment and assured the cooperation of the Group in the implementation of the project;

(h) The Delhi Group discussed in detail and took note of the information paper prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division (SNA/M2.04/12) on the treatment of the informal sector in the 1993 System of National Accounts (SNA) (available from http://unstats.un.org/unsd/nationalaccount/AEG/papers/m2informalsector.pdf). It was noted that in 2004 the Statistical Commission had called for collaboration between the Statistics Division and the Group in preparing recommendations on the informal sector for the updating of the 1993 SNA. Many of the issues that had been raised in the paper had already been addressed by the International Conference of Labour Statisticians and the Group;

(i) The Delhi Group expressed its appreciation for the paper sent by the Central Bureau of Statistics of Kenya on the assessment of the quality of the informal sector surveys undertaken in the country and noted the general consensus that a special meeting needed to be organized by the Group with funding from donor agencies in order that experiences of countries on quality issues in respect of informal sector/employment statistics might be shared;

(j) The Delhi Group recognized the importance of high-quality data on status in employment for the reduction of coverage errors in mixed household and enterprise surveys of the informal sector, as well as of classification errors in surveys on informal employment; and recommended that ILO develop a module of household survey questions on status in employment for testing by countries. Such

questions would seek to provide an alternative to the question on status in employment that was based on the self-classification of respondents according to a list of precoded answer categories which was traditionally included in household surveys but had become increasingly difficult to use; the questions would also help to subclassify the various types of informal employment defined by the Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians;

(k) The Delhi Group noted the work currently being undertaken by the United Nations Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications to revise ISIC and produce Rev.4 by 2007. Considering that this kind of economic activity was an important variable for the classification of informal sector activities, the Group recommended that the Chairman of the Group should take appropriate action to request that activities undertaken by informal sector enterprises be reflected in sufficient detail in ISIC, Rev.4.

Future activities

5. The future work programme of the Delhi Group includes:

(a) Identification, definition and development of a core set of indicators on informal sector and informal employment in line with the importance placed on informal employment by the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality of the United Nations Millennium Project;

(b) Operationalization of the definition of informal jobs of employees adopted by the Seventeenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians;

(c) Definition and measurement of subgroups of the various types of informal jobs in relation to status of employment and development of methods and survey questions to reduce classification errors in respect of employment situations lying on the borderline of status-of-employment categories;

(d) Identification of various types of informal jobs in agriculture;

(e) Devising a checklist for the evaluation of data quality of surveys on the informal sector and informal employment;

(f) Further work on the measurement of the contribution of informal sector and informal employment to GDP, including work by regional and international organizations;

(g) Recommending more detailed categories for the updating of the International Standard Classification of Occupations, 1988, to cover specific descriptions of informal activities;

(h) Continuation of conceptual and analytical work on measuring the links between poverty and informal employment.

Point of contact

Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
Sardar Patel Bhawan, Sansad Marg, New Delhi 110 001, India
Tel: 91 11 2373 2150
Fax: 91 11 2334 4689/2334 2384
E-mail: csopiu@nic.in
Website: http://www.mospi.nic.in

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Items for information: statistical capacity-building

Statistical capacity-building

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Statistical Commission in accordance with a request of the Commission at its thirty-sixth session.[a] It provides an overview of the approach of the United Nations Statistics Division adopted in its statistical capacity-building programme and reports on technical cooperation activities in 2004-2005. The report is submitted to the Commission for information. The Commission may wish to take note of the report.

[a] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4* (E/2005/24), chap. I.B.

* E/CN.3/2006/1.

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I. Introduction

1. Over the years, the Economic and Social Council and the Statistical Commission have provided the United Nations Statistics Division with strong mandates for technical cooperation.[1] At its thirty-sixth session, the Commission strongly supported the proposed strategic focus for technical cooperation activities of the Division. It further stressed the need for technical cooperation to be demand driven, responsive to local conditions, nationally owned and better coordinated. The Commission recognized that there is a role for the Division to play in donor coordination and recommended that the Division, together with the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, carefully review what coordination mechanisms would be most suitable and effective.

2. The Commission has also continuously stressed the critical importance of statistical capacity-building in the context of increasing national and international demand for development information and has been closely monitoring progress in that area. In particular, at its thirty-sixth session, it requested the Division to produce an assessment of the ability of countries to produce individual indicators on all Millennium Development Goals and has asked the Division to report regularly to the Commission on that assessment, beginning at its thirty-seventh session. In addition, resulting from the monitoring requirements for the Millennium Development Goals and the United Nations Development Agenda, there has been an increased awareness of the importance and urgency of building statistical capacity in less developed countries in order to ensure the measurability of progress towards those goals and to inform the necessary policies and plans to achieve them.

3. The present report describes programme activities undertaken by the Division to address the main points raised by the Commission as reported above. In particular, it provides an overview of the programme approach to capacity-building; reviews the technical cooperation activities of the Division in 2004-2005, including a brief description of funding mechanisms; and briefly summarizes the response of the Division as well as the Inter-Agency and Expert Group meeting on Millennium Development Goals Indicators, in relation to countries' priorities in capacity-building activities and methods of coordination.

II. Approach to and activities in the area of statistical capacity-building

4. The mission of the capacity-building programme of the United Nations Statistics Division is to assist Member States in building strong national statistical systems, which in turn are the building blocks of a solid global statistical system. The Division focuses on efforts that are nationally owned, demand driven and tailored to local needs, as well as effectively coordinated among the various international donors. The three main components of the statistical capacity-building programme — building national statistical systems, supporting good statistical governance and knowledge transfer — are described below.

A. Building national statistical systems

5. An effective statistical system that can meet key requirements for results-based management and all other data needs for the country must include the following two elements: (a) structural factors: an effective and well run national statistical service, based on an appropriate legal and institutional framework, sufficient financial and human resources and a functioning information technology (IT) infrastructure; (b) programme factors: a regular programme of data collection and analysis, including population censuses, integrated household survey programmes, civil registration systems and compilation of economic statistics. The Division assists countries in these areas through training, advisory services and regional and subregional projects that aim to strengthen the capacity of national statistical offices and improve South-South and intraregional cooperation.

6. In addition, the Division offers direct assistance to countries in their efforts to develop a national plan to build statistical systems for the production and dissemination of timely and reliable data. In 2004-2005, it received and responded to several such requests. In order to improve the services provided to countries the Division convened teams of international experts to respond to each country request. The teams then proceeded to provide the necessary assistance to the country under the leadership of the Division. Originally, it had been envisioned that a full-time interregional adviser on the development of national statistical systems would be recruited to lead that process. However, it was subsequently decided that the use of short-term consultants to conduct those specific missions would be more appropriate and effective.

B. Building good statistical governance

7. A sound statistical system requires adequate supporting legislation, appropriate institutional arrangements and an adequate level of human resources and technology. In addition, the national statistical office should be fully independent and have a clear mandate for the collection, processing and dissemination of official statistics that is supported by a strong political commitment.

8. The Division provides advisory services to national statistical offices to help them develop their institutional arrangements, recommending action plans to improve their organizational structure, legislative framework and supporting institutions. Those efforts are integrally linked with the Division's continuing mandate to promote the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics.

C. Knowledge transfer

9. Statistical capacity-building in domain knowledge is an integral part of the Division's programme and it is closely intertwined with the Division's work on international standard-setting, which allows for an efficient transfer of international standards and practices to developing countries. The Division draws on its technical expertise to provide support to countries in all areas covered by its regular work programme — economic statistics, social and demographic statistics, trade statistics,

environment statistics, development, Millennium Development Goals indicators and monitoring. Methodological development, in particular the preparation of handbooks, is funded through the regular programme of the Division.

III. United Nations Statistics Division activities in 2004-2005

10. In the biennium 2004-2005, the Division organized and funded 28 statistical capacity-building activities, attended by some 1,026 officials from more than 110 national statistical offices. The activities were conducted in collaboration with the regional commissions, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). They covered the following statistical areas: environment statistics, energy statistics, classifications, national accounts, water statistics, disability statistics, population and housing censuses, social statistics, economic censuses, development indicators, poverty statistics, international merchandise trade statistics and statistics of trade in services. In addition, study visits for more than 120 statisticians from developing countries or countries in transition were arranged to provide individual training, reinforce existing networks for the exchange of practical experience and create opportunities for them to participate in international statistical forums. Throughout the biennium, the Division undertook 27 technical advisory missions in the following areas: use of information technology in statistics, statistical organization and management, national accounts, and population and housing censuses. The missions were undertaken by the Division's interregional advisers, currently focusing on national accounts and population and housing censuses, and regular staff.

11. The Division continued the successful implementation of the regional project, funded from the Development Account,[2] in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region (2004-2006), with training workshops on environment statistics, energy statistics and Millennium Development Goals indicators. As in previous years, the Division continues to coordinate and cooperate with existing support activities in the region by the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and the Observatoire économique et statistique d'Afrique sub-saharienne (AFRISTAT). In addition, the Division engaged in preparatory work in connection with a new regional development account project on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, which is expected to be approved at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly.

12. In order to use its resources effectively and to take advantage of the close link between its ongoing methodological work and technical cooperation projects, the Division makes technical advisory services, workshops and fellowships mutually supportive. The interregional advisers, most seminars and workshops and the fellowship programmes are funded through the regular programme for technical cooperation.

13. The Division has an extensive monitoring and evaluation system, which provides it with feedback in the short term (upon conclusion of the event) and in the longer term (after 6 to 12 months after the event). The feedback received by the

Division over the biennium has been extremely positive. About 78 per cent of respondents to evaluation questionnaires distributed at the end of the workshops stated that they had acquired new statistical knowledge during the workshop. In evaluations carried out after advisory missions, all surveyed countries indicated that the mission had provided their offices with new statistical knowledge. Furthermore, the missions received an average rating of 4.3 (on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being excellent) and all were rated good or above. Responses to follow-up surveys to workshops indicated that participants found them useful or better in regards to their longer-term impact. More than 60 per cent of those respondents stated that they had been able to implement the workshops' recommendations. In a follow-up survey to the Division's advisory missions, it was found that 62 per cent of the recommendations made by the advisers had been implemented.

IV. Coordinating capacity-building activities

14. The United Nations Statistics Division, as mandated by the Statistical Commission, assists in donor coordination in statistical capacity activities. The strategic approach favoured by the Division is that coordination should take place at the country level, based on the national strategy or master plan. Priorities should be defined by the national authority and donors' inputs should supplement Government funding, be driven by countries' requests and cover specific activities only in accordance with the plan. Work to that end has been initiated within the Committee for Coordination of Statistical Activities (see E/2006/30). Preliminary discussions have been held by the Committee on the modality of the coordination. A fuller discussion will be held at future meetings of the Committee. At this initial stage, the Division will assist the International Household Survey Network in creating a database on household surveys that the international agencies plan to conduct.

15. The Division also has an important function in facilitating South-South cooperation and sharing of experience, as well as in promoting the provision of technical assistance from more developed statistical systems. In keeping with the strategy discussed at the thirty-sixth session of the Commission, the Division has promoted a regional and subregional approach to statistical capacity-building programmes to help promote intraregional cooperation and exchange of practical experience relevant to the local socio-economic context.

16. The Division also coordinates the work of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators. The Division and other partner agencies fund the participation of national statisticians from developing countries to the regular meetings of the Group. At the last meeting of the Group, held in Rome on 26 and 27 October 2005, the Division, UNFPA and the World Bank funded the participation of 20 representatives from 17 national statistical offices. Given the large participation of national statistical offices, together with donors and international agencies, that meeting represented a good opportunity to take note of countries' experiences in building statistical capacity and in using statistics for advocacy and policymaking and monitoring, and to agree on priorities in statistical capacity-building for the production and use of development indicators and recommendations to improve the effective delivery of technical assistance and the coordination of support at the national and international levels. The recommendations of the Group are contained in the annex.

V. Conclusion

17. **The United Nations Statistics Division will continue to improve and expand its statistical capacity-building programme. It will report to the Commission at the end of the 2006-2007 biennium. The present report is for the information of the Commission.**

Notes

[1] For instance, in its resolution 2000/27, the Council reaffirmed the importance of national efforts to build statistical capacity in all countries, including through statistical training, and of effective international support in that context for developing countries.

[2] This funding mechanism is provided by the General Assembly; the various development sectors within the United Nations compete for funds by presenting project proposals that have a strong regional capacity-building orientation.

Annex

Summary of recommendations on capacity-building of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators

Eighth meeting, Rome, 26 and 27 October 2005

1. With regard to good practices and ways to improve statistical capacity in countries, the meeting agreed on the need to: (a) strengthen the capacity for data analysis (with international assistance) and improve IT capacity and use; (b) improve coordination with line ministries producing statistics (with the additional challenge of assessing quality of the data they produce); (c) establish a national statistical office that is fully independent and has a clear mandate for the collection, processing and dissemination of official statistics that is supported by a strong political commitment; (d) set up career incentives to retain qualified staff; (e) address the issue of balance between national budget- and donor-supported projects; (f) develop a strategic national statistical master plan which should be based on country's needs rather than be driven by international agencies' priorities and defined by the national statistical office together with all the stakeholders in the country; (g) seek support from international agencies only to cover specific costs in accordance with the plan; and (h) in order for the above to be sustainable ensure that most national statistical initiatives are covered by national budgets and supported by a strong political will.

2. The meeting further agreed on the following recommendations:

(a) Strategic national planning and national strategies for the development of statistics are key to improving statistics. This entails having supporting legislation and governing arrangements and formulating a national statistical plan through a mechanism to involve all stakeholders;

(b) Statistical development should be anchored at the decision-making level. The Millennium Development Goals are used to inform strategies/policies, which in turn should inform statistical systems at the subnational, national and global levels on the statistics that are needed;

(c) Statistical development needs to be sustainable. There is a need to cost each component of a national statistical plan and to promote its funding by the national budget and by donors. Participants stressed the need to improve/increase the retention of qualified staff in national statistical offices and to better transfer skills among staff. Also, the role of the regional commissions should be reviewed and South-South cooperation enhanced;

(d) Good practices in statistics should be enhanced and technical cooperation strengthened. Also, the following issues were recognized as the basis for good practices in statistics: the coordination of data requests needs to be improved; IT needs to be strengthened to improve transparency and to enhance communication; international agencies should rely more heavily on official statistics produced by national statistical offices for their data needs; and coordination by donors, bilateral and United Nations agencies in countries should be improved.

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Items for information: statistical capacity-building

Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century on statistical capacity-building

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Statistical Commission a report prepared by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21). This report outlines the efforts of the Partnership in promoting the better use of better statistics as a central part of the enabling environment for development progress, particularly through support to countries in the design, implementation and monitoring of national strategies for the development of statistics with a focus on low-income countries, through advocacy and by encouraging donor collaboration in statistical support programmes. The Commission is requested to take note of the report, which is submitted to the Commission for information.

Report of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century on statistical capacity-building

I. Executive summary

1. With the increasing emphasis on managing for development results, national policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware of the importance of statistics in informing and designing development interventions. The Second International Roundtable on Managing for Development Results, held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 4 and 5 February 2005, called upon countries to design national strategies for the development of statistics (NSDS) so as to provide a framework for strengthening statistical capacity across

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the entire national statistical system in order to meet evolving national and international user needs and priorities for statistics in a more coordinated, synergistic and efficient manner. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS21) is assisting countries in the development of their national strategies by drafting supporting documentation, through advocacy, and by promoting donor collaboration, organizing regional workshops to discuss issues and share experiences, and helping countries secure appropriate financial and technical assistance for the design and implementation of their strategies.

II. The national strategies for the development of statistics

2. With the increasing international focus on results-based management, national policymakers and the international development community have become increasingly aware that good statistics are part of the enabling environment for development. Strengthening statistical capacity is therefore essential to supporting the design, monitoring and evaluation of national development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, sector strategies, and the Millennium Development Goals.

3. In recognition of the development community's reliance, in managing for results, on good, timely statistics, the Second International Roundtable issued the six-part Marrakech Action Plan for Statistics, which encourages all developing countries to design and implement national strategies for the development of statistics so as to improve the evidence base by providing a strategic framework for developing relevant poverty-focused statistics.

4. A national strategy provides a country with both the means to strengthen statistical capacity across the entire national statistical system and a vision regarding where the system should be in 5 to 10 years and sets milestones towards realizing that vision. It encompasses a robust framework and action plan for building the statistical capacity to meet both current and future data needs. In particular, the aim is to align statistical development with wider poverty-focused national development programmes and strategies.[1]

III. Role of the Partnership in the national strategy process

5. In line with the Marrakech Action Plan, the Partnership has focused on assisting low-income countries in designing a strategy by the end of 2006 and in starting to implement it by the following year in order to have nationally owned and produced data for all relevant Millennium Development Goal indicators by 2010.

6. The Partnership supports country efforts to design, implement and monitor their national strategies for the development of statistics primarily through the following types of activities:

- Development of national strategies for the development of statistics methodology: the Partnership offers methodological advice and documentation, targeting different audiences and purposes.

- Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools designed to assist countries and donor institutions in making the case for increased support to statistics and for adopting a strategic approach to statistical development.
- Promotion of donor collaboration: the Partnership encourages and facilitates information-sharing and aid harmonization among donors, including through its light reporting mechanism (see para. 10).
- Partnership regional programmes whose main components include (a) establishing baseline assessments; (b) organizing regional workshops; (c) undertaking advocacy efforts to garner political support for the design and implementation of national strategies for the development of statistics; (d) consolidating partner efforts on the national level; (e) mobilizing technical and financial support for the design and implementation of national strategies; and (f) reporting on progress made.

IV. Progress in supporting country efforts towards designing, implementing and monitoring national strategies for the development of statistics and directions for future work

7. In collaboration with its partners, the Partnership has made great strides with respect to assisting country efforts in designing, implementing and monitoring national strategies for the development of statistics. Examples of recent progress made and future directions in specific activities are given below.

8. *Development of national strategy methodology*: A national strategy advocacy paper and design guide were produced in late 2004 and made available as background documents to the Commission at its thirty-sixth session. A guide to drafting a national strategy road map has also been produced and translated into several languages. A knowledge base of key documents written by PARIS21 partners on how to carry out national strategy processes (for example, stakeholder analyses, user needs assessments, human resource strategies, data quality assessments) has been produced and launched on the Partnership website.[2] Most of the material destined for the knowledge base exists already but where there are gaps, new guidelines are being commissioned. For example, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) will produce a guide on how to design a strategy for developing the national agricultural statistical system and how to integrate that strategy into the system-wide national strategy for the development of statistics. Similar guides will be commissioned for other sectoral statistics issues. Throughout 2006, the emphasis will change from supporting the design of national strategies for the development of statistics to supporting strategy implementation, including the production of a guide to national strategy implementation and building the knowledge base with case-study materials on implementing processes of change. Topics for other papers to be produced include exploring the relationship between national strategies for the development of statistics and the poverty reduction strategy papers and between national strategies for the development of statistics and the Millennium Development Goals.

9. *Advocacy and the development of statistical advocacy tools*. In 2005, the Partnership produced a francophone statistical advocacy film entitled *La statistique au service du développement*, which makes the case for increased support to

statistical development. In collaboration with FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a similar film is being produced on agricultural statistics. The Partnership has also produced a paper entitled "Measuring up to the measurement problem: the role of statistics in evidence-based policy-making" (available from http://sitesources.worldbank.org/DATASTATISTICS/Resources/Measuring_Up_to_the_Measurement_Problem.pdf) (January 2005) which demonstrates how the availability and use of statistics have led to positive development results and how the absence or lack of statistics has led to bad policy decisions. A series of pamphlets, leaflets and presentations based on this paper have been produced. The Partnership has disseminated these products and advocated for the better use of better statistics at every available opportunity.

10. *Promotion of donor collaboration.* The first Forum on African Statistical Development (FASDev), held in Addis Ababa on 12 and 13 May 2004, had underlined the need for greater exchange of information among technical and financial partners who supported statistical development in African countries. In addition to contributing to a stronger collaboration and harmonization among these partners, such an exchange would support the preparation of national strategies for the development of statistics in African countries. In response to this identified need, the Partnership developed a light reporting mechanism, which covers donor information on statistical activities in a specific country or region, the type of assistance provided, the duration of the activities, the type and amount of funding, references to any documentation related to these activities, and the institutional contact person. The light reporting mechanism has been launched to all donors supporting statistical development in Africa, and a summary report of the findings of this exercise will be presented at the second FASDev meeting, scheduled in Addis Ababa for February 2006. If successful, this mechanism may be replicated for other regions and operationalized annually.

11. *Regional programmes.* Within the framework of its regional programmes, the Partnership has produced baseline assessments on the status of strategic statistical planning in all countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Similar exercises are under way for the other regions of the developing world. Regarding the mobilization of financial resources, the Partnership and the World Bank are working closely to channel countries towards funding mechanisms such as the Bank's Trust Fund for Statistical Capacity Building and the African Development Bank for design of national strategies for the development of statistics and the STATCAP lending facility for implementation of the national strategies. There is also evidence that bilateral funding of statistics is increasing; however, more is needed to help countries implement their strategies. Technical resources to assist countries in the design of their national strategies are also lacking. In collaboration with several partners, including the African Development Bank and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Partnership organized a series of briefing sessions for potential consultants. The objective of these training sessions was to present the national strategies for the development of statistics approach so that the consultants would be better informed on how to advise countries preparing their strategies. Since focusing its efforts on national strategies for the development of statistics in 2004, the Partnership has co-organized with its partners a dozen regional workshops on designing national strategies in the regions of the Arab States, Central America and sub-Saharan Africa. A series of similar workshops are planned for Asian subregions, starting with the South Asia workshop (December 2005). These workshops aim to

assist country national strategy design teams in addressing burning issues relating to strategy design and implementation. Pursuant to collaboration among the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Partnership, ECA and the World Bank, a Reference Regional Strategic Framework for Statistical Capacity-Building in Africa was launched in 2005. The overall objective of the initiative is to formulate a regional strategy for guiding future statistical capacity-building activities in Africa. The Framework will, in particular, be focused on strategic direction and appropriate implementation instruments for improving the planning, financing, management and coordination of statistical development activities. It is expected that this new Framework, once adopted by all stakeholders, will help create much-needed synergies, reduce duplication of efforts, and lead to sustainable statistical capacity in the African region.

Notes

[1] A more detailed discussion of national strategies for the development of statistics was provided in the report of the Partnership (E/CN.3/2005/18) submitted to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session in 2005.

[2] Available from http://www.paris21.org/pages/designing-nsds/NSDS-documents-knowledge-base/index.asp?tab=KnowledgeBase.

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Policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

Summary

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its thirty-sixth session, the present note was prepared to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2005 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Council. The Commission is invited to take note of the brief contained herein.

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I. Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2005/48, regarding the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, took note with appreciation of the contributions of the functional commissions, the regional commissions and other relevant subsidiary bodies to the preparation of the input of the Economic and Social Council to the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly; welcomed the progress made in the review of the working methods of several functional commissions, as mandated by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/270 B, in order better to pursue the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits; recognized that progress had been made in several areas to enhance cooperation among the functional commissions and between the functional commissions and the funds and programmes; and invited the functional commissions to continue to work towards further strengthening that cooperation, including through the exchange of experiences with the aim of contributing to the quality and impact of intergovernmental decisions.

Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the Statistics Division

Methods of work

2. In preparation for its thirty-sixth meeting in 2005, and in compliance with the request of the Economic and Social Council, the Bureau of the Statistical Commission conducted a detailed review of the working methods of the Commission (E/CN.3/2005/2). The Commission took note of the suggestions made by the Bureau and implemented some procedures on a trial basis during the session; it agreed to further analyse the experiences and take them into account in the preparation for the thirty-seventh session (see also E/CN.3/2006/2).

3. It is an important feature of the methods of work of the Statistical Commission that its agenda includes a standing item on follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions and their possible implications for the work of the Commission. The notes prepared in support of that item, such as the present one, are an important means of sharing information between the Council and the Statistical Commission. Relevant decisions of other functional commissions are reported to the Statistical Commission under the various substantive items related to demographic statistics, environment statistics, social and gender statistics.

Development indicators

4. Ever since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators annually.

5. At its current session, the Commission is considering a report of the Secretary-General describing the results of the assessment by the Statistics Division of countries' capacity to produce the Millennium Development Goal indicators (E/CN.3/2006/14). Annex III of the report contains a brief update on the ongoing work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goal Indicators. The Commission is also discussing this year a report prepared by the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goal indicators, which presents a critical analysis of the findings of the Secretary-General regarding countries' capacity to produce the Millennium Development Goal indicators (E/CN.3/2006/15).

II. Mainstreaming gender perspectives

Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

6. In its resolution 2005/31, the Council, recalling its resolutions 2001/41 of 7 July 2001, 2002/23 of 24 July 2002, 2003/49 of 24 July 2003 and 2004/4 of 7 July 2004, called upon all entities of the United Nations system to intensify efforts to address the challenges to the integration of gender perspectives in policies and programmes, including by further developing and institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation tools and gender impact analysis methodologies, promoting the collection, compilation and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and ensuring the use by them of such data.

Actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

7. Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the range of development indicators considered by the Commission in the context of follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and United Nations conferences and summits, which is covered under item 3 (k) of the provisional agenda of the current session. The Division is responsible for coordinating the preparation of statistics for the Millennium Development Goal indicators. The database on such indicators maintained by the Division contains data broken down by sex to the extent possible.

8. A further relevant statistical activity in this context is the publication at the end of 2005 by the Statistics Division of *Progress of the World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*. That publication highlights the availability of gender statistics and assesses progress made in this area over the last 30 years (see also E/CN.3/2006/12).

III. Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010

Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

9. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2005/44, recalled the ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2004

on the theme "Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". The Council called upon development partners, including organizations of the United Nations system, to provide assistance to national statistical bodies of the least developed countries in order to strengthen monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

10. A relevant statistical activity in this context, which will largely benefit least developed countries, is the Statistics Division's project on poverty measurement, which will result in a publication entitled *Handbook on Poverty Statistics: Concepts, Methods and Policy Use*, to be published in 2005 (see E/CN.3/2006/19). The project will assist policymakers and statisticians in Member countries to face the growing demand for poverty statistics and related information by building up a system of poverty measurement that is responsive to national and international data needs.

11. Moreover, the Statistics Division has launched a development account project for the period 2004-2006 in the Economic Community of West African States region to strengthen statistical capacity there. Several least developed countries are directly benefiting from that initiative. In addition, pending formal approval by the General Assembly, a project to strengthen statistical capacity in support of progress towards the internationally agreed development goals in the Southern African Development Community region is expected to start in January 2006.

IV. The 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

12. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2005/13, recalling its resolutions endorsing previous decennial World Population and Housing Census Programmes; having reviewed the efforts made by Member States to carry out censuses as part of the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme and also the activities of the United Nations and funding agencies in support of national efforts in that regard; considering the importance of the population and housing census to the preparation of a meaningful core set of national data and information necessary for socio-economic planning and governance; and recognizing the increasing importance of the 2010 round of population and housing censuses for meeting data needs for the implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, and to other regional and national meetings, supported the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme. The Council urged Member States to carry out a population and housing census at least once during the period from 2005 to 2014 and to disseminate census results as an essential source of information for small-area, national, regional and international planning and development and to provide census results to national stakeholders as well as the United Nations and other appropriate intergovernmental

organizations. The Council also emphasized the importance of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme for socio-economic planning, and requested increased support for the Programme. It furthermore requested the Secretary-General to implement the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme.

Actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

13. At its current session, the Commission is considering a report (E/CN.3/2006/16) of the Secretary-General summarizing activities completed in response to the requests made by the Commission regarding the role of the Statistics Division as a secretariat of the 2010 World Programme on Population and Housing Censuses. The report also briefs the Commission on the work on the revision and update of the United Nations *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses* and the coordination with regional activities in the preparation for the 2010 round of population and housing censuses.

V. Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

14. At its fourth session, from 16 to 27 May 2005, the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues recommended that Governments, the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations should, within the context of the 2005 Millennium Development Goals review and beyond, develop disaggregated data and information on indigenous peoples, in partnership with indigenous peoples.[1] It also recommended that the United Nations agencies involved in data-collection processes regarding the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 2 ("Achieve universal primary education") should develop indicators relevant for indigenous peoples that capture their specificities including languages, culture, values and world views.

Actions taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

15. In its report on the fourth session, the Permanent Forum welcomed the collaboration with the Statistics Division in reviewing national practices in data collection and dissemination in the areas of ethnicity, language and religion. The Forum was also pleased to note that data on national and/or ethnic groups were being made available online by the Statistics Division at the following website: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybcens.htm.

Notes

[1] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 43* (E/2005/43).

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Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted to the Statistical Commission in accordance with a request of the Commission at its thirty-sixth session.[a] It summarizes the main conclusions of the two 2005 meetings of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in New York on 28 February 2005 and in Rome, from 12 to 14 September 2005, respectively. The present report is presented for information. The Commission may wish to take the views expressed by the Committee into account in its discussions of relevant agenda items.

[a] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2005, Supplement No. 4* (E/2005/24), chap. I.B.

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I. Introduction

1. The Committee for Coordination of Statistical Activities, chaired by the International Labour Organization (ILO), held its fifth and sixth meetings in New York on 28 February 2005 and in Rome, from 12 to 14 September 2005, respectively.

2. The main objective of the Committee is to promote coordination, integration and complementarity among the statistical programmes of international organizations, to prevent programme duplication and to reduce reporting burdens on Member States, and to promote coordination and consistency in statistical practices and development. At its fifth and sixth meetings, the Committee shared information, discussed coordination of activities and agreed on subsequent steps to be undertaken in a number of common areas of work. Forty-three people representing 30 international agencies and organizations attended the fifth meeting in New York, and 26 people, representing 21 international agencies and organizations attended the sixth meeting in Rome. A complete list of participating agencies is given in the annex.

II. Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

A. Principles for statistical activities in international organizations

3. At its fifth meeting, the Committee took note of the draft declaration of principles for statistical activities in international organizations prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division (for details of work on the declaration of principles, see E/CN.3/2006/13). It agreed that the text should be redrafted without legally binding wording and with a focus on practices. At the sixth meeting, the revised draft, entitled "Principles and practices for International Statistics" was presented, reviewed and endorsed by the Committee. The Committee decided that agencies should review their current practices in relation to the principles and disseminate the results of the review. It was decided that the principles and practices would be posted on the Statistics Division website dedicated to good statistical practices, with related information on their use by Committee members based on extracts from other agencies' websites. The Committee also agreed that the principles and practices could be used in different ways by agencies, individually or collectively with others, depending on their specific needs and circumstances. It took note of the fact that the mandate and governance of individual international organizations could be such that not all principles and practices were applicable under current circumstances, even though they could be used for future improvements.

B. Issues relating to the implementation of good statistical practices in international organizations

4. At its fifth meeting, the Committee took note of a set of proposals to promote the implementation of principles for international statistics, prepared by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (see

E/CN.3/2006/22), and of the oral presentation by the representative of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Committee discussed the development of new technical standards under the auspices of the Standards for Data and Metadata Exchange initiative; the development of a quality-assurance framework; and the idea of assessing the needs and reviewing existing initiatives on the training of statisticians within international organizations. The Committee agreed to form teams to prepare papers on the three above-mentioned initiatives: OECD would lead the preparation of a paper on the Metadata Exchange initiative; the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) would coordinate the preparation of a paper on quality assurance; and IMF would prepare a report on training programmes for statisticians in international organizations.

5. At its sixth meeting, the Committee took note of the reports of the three teams. On the first report, the Committee agreed that the development of new technical standards under the auspices of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange initiative was an important step towards an agreed set of rules for data collection, with the potential of making data and metadata exchange more efficient. It also agreed that a decision on the adoption by the Committee of the initiative would be made at the next session in March 2006.

6. Eurostat presented the report on the development of a quality-assurance framework for international and supranational organizations. The Committee agreed that the project was very useful and should continue. Eurostat was mandated to continue the process on the basis of the report presented at the meeting. The following groups were formed to continue the work on key areas:

(a) Quality frameworks: Eurostat, IMF, European Central Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO);

(b) Systems for reviews: Eurostat, OECD, Economic Commission for Europe (ECE);

(c) Quality reporting: Eurostat, FAO;

(d) Labelling statistical information: Eurostat, European Central Bank;

(e) European Conference on Quality in Survey Statistics: Eurostat, United Nations Statistics Division;

(f) Implementation: Eurostat, ILO.

7. The Committee took note of the report submitted by IMF to assess existing staff training initiatives in international organizations. The Committee welcomed the initiative and agreed to establish a network of representatives from all agencies to exchange information and training materials and explore possible new activities. It was decided that IMF would continue to be the lead agency for this work.

C. Tourism statistics

8. At its fifth meeting, the Committee welcomed the advances made by the inter-secretariat working group on tourism statistics, encouraged it to continue its work as outlined in the report prepared by the World Tourism Organization and decided that no further action by the Committee was required.

D. Statistics software

9. At its fifth meeting, the Committee welcomed the inventory of statistics software prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division and asked that it be extended to include information on licensing and cost of transfer, and be posted on the Committee's website. It also noted that the sharing of information on software could be extended to include countries. The issue was not discussed at the sixth meeting.

E. Coordination of technical cooperation activities

10. At its fifth meeting, the Committee welcomed the offer by the Statistics Division to take the lead in the preparation of a paper on how the Committee could most effectively coordinate technical cooperation. The paper was prepared in collaboration with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, IMF, OECD and the World Tourism Organization, and presented at the sixth meeting.

11. At its sixth meeting, the Committee reviewed ways of improving coordination among its members and possibly other multilateral and bilateral donors, in developing and implementing statistical capacity-building programmes in countries. It was decided that the Committee would propose activities and establish efficient coordination mechanisms, the Statistics Division would prepare a paper to outline proposals in the area, and that a half-day special session would be devoted to discussions of coordination and approaches to strategic planning for capacity-building activities and define the scope of such work at the eighth meeting in September 2006. The Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century would provide substantial input to this work, based on information collected for the Forum for African Statistical Development.

F. International Household Survey Network

12. At its sixth meeting, the Committee took note of a report prepared by the World Bank in conjunction with members of the International Household Survey Network management group, outlining progress achieved since the launch of the network in 2004 and highlighting areas and issues for future work. The Committee agreed that the Network was an important initiative and represented a useful step towards better coordination of international efforts for household surveys in developing countries. The Committee also agreed that successful implementation depended on addressing key issues — such as microdata confidentiality — and would require full involvement of members of the management group and their review of the upcoming work programme. The Committee also recognized that the involvement of national statistical offices at a later stage would be crucial.

G. Classification of statistical activities

13. At the sixth Committee meeting, ECE presented the process undertaken to revise its classification of statistical activities. The Committee agreed that it would await the completion of the process and the adoption by the Conference of European

Statisticians of the classification before exploring the possibility of adapting the ECE classification to the needs of other international agencies.

H. Inter-secretariat working group on services statistics

14. At its sixth meeting, the Committee took note of the oral presentation by OECD on the formation of the inter-secretariat working group on services statistics and the preliminary work done. It was agreed that the report of the Group to the Statistical Commission would highlight priorities and possible areas of interest, including links with work previously done in the area.

I. Other issues discussed at the sixth meeting

15. The Committee was informed of the assessment by the Statistics Division of the capacity of countries to produce Millennium Development Goals indicators, under the guidance of the Friends of the Chair on Millennium Development Goals indicators. The representative of the Statistics Division explained that the assessment was being made on the basis of the data currently available in the indicators database maintained by the Division.

16. The Committee took note of a proposal to establish a professional association of international statisticians, based on individual membership. It welcomed the initiative and offered its support to the process of creating the association.

17. The Committee welcomed the trend of an increasing number of agencies expressing interest in joining it. It welcomed the European Central Bank as a new member. The secretariat was asked to approach agencies that were not currently members to inform them of the Committee and its activities.

Annex

Participating agencies and offices

Fifth meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (New York, 28 February 2005)

United Nations entities and programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

- United Nations Statistics Division
- United Nations Population Division

Economic Commission for Europe

Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Population Fund

United Nations Children's Fund

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

World Health Organization

Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization

World Bank

International Monetary Fund

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

World Tourism Organization

World Trade Organization

International Telecommunication Union

Other international and non-governmental organizations

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Statistical Office of the European Communities

Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States

Bank for International Settlements

African Development Bank

Asian Development Bank

Arab Institute for Training and Research in Statistics

Caribbean Community Secretariat

Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century

Sixth meeting of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (Rome, 12-14 September 2005)

United Nations entities and programmes

Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat

United Nations Statistics Division

Economic Commission for Europe

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

United Nations Development Programme

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

World Bank

International Monetary Fund

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

World Tourism Organization

World Trade Organization

International Telecommunication Union

Other international and non-governmental organizations

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

Statistical Office of the European Communities

Interstate Statistical Committee of the Commonwealth of Independent States

Bank for International Settlements

African Development Bank

European Central Bank

Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century

United Nations E/CN.3/2006/31

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Statistical Commission
Thirty-seventh session
7-10 March 2006
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*
Provisional agenda and dates for the thirty-eighth session of the Commission

Draft multi-year programme of work for the Statistical Commission 2006-2009

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request contained in Economic and Social Council resolution 1999/51 of 29 July 1999, a proposed multi-year programme of work for the Statistical Commission is set out below. Reflecting comments from members and observers of the Commission and a review of its workplans by the United Nations Statistics Division, it constitutes a revision of the multi-year programme of work for 2005-2008 (E/CN.3/2005/26) considered by the Commission at its thirty-sixth session.

* E/CN.3/2006/1.

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Proposed multi-year programme of work for the Statistical Commission 2006-2009

Agenda item[a]	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*
1. Demographic and social statistics				
(a) Population and housing censuses	X	X		X
(b) Human settlements statistics			X	
(c) Paris Group on Labour and Compensation (city group)	X		X	
(d) Health statistics	X	X	X	X
(e) Social statistics	X		X	
(f) Poverty statistics	X			
(g) Rio Group on Poverty Statistics (city group)	X			
(h) Statistics of drugs and drug use			X	
(i) Washington Group on Disability Measurement (city group)		X		X
2. Economic statistics				
(a) National accounts	X	X	X	X
(b) Agricultural statistics		X		
(c) Industrial statistics	X	X		
(d) Roundtable on Business Survey Frames (city group)	X		X	
(e) Energy statistics	X		X	
(f) Oslo Group on Energy Statistics (city group)		X		X
(g) Distributive trade statistics	X			
(h) International merchandise trade statistics	X		X	
(i) Statistics of international trade in services		X		X
(j) Statistics of services	X		X	
(k) Information and communication technologies statistics		X		
(l) Tourism statistics		X		
(m) Finance statistics		X		
(n) International Comparison Programme	X	X	X	X
(o) Ottawa Group on Price Indexes (city group)		X		X
(p) Intersecretariat Working Group on Price Statistics		X		X
(q) Statistics of science and technology			X	
(r) Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics (city group)	X		X	
(s) Voorburg Group on Service Statistics (city group)			X	
(t) Integrated economic statistics	X			
3. Natural resources and environment statistics				
(a) Environment statistics	X		X	
(b) Environmental accounting	X	X		X
(c) London Group on Environmental Accounting		X		X
4. Activities not classified by field				
(a) Coordination and integration of statistical programmes	X	X	X	X

Agenda item[a]	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*
(b) Programme questions (United Nations Statistics Division)	X	X	X	X
(c) Management issues in national statistical offices		X		
(d) Statistics of human development		X		
(e) Implementation of the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics				X
(f) International economic and social classifications	X	X	X	
(g) Common open standards for the exchange and sharing of data and metadata		X		
(h) Presentation of statistical data and metadata				
(i) Coordination of ongoing methodological work		X		
(j) Statistical capacity-building	X	X	X	X
(k) Dissemination of statistics by the United Nations Statistics Division		X		
(l) Development indicators	X	X	X	X
(m) Follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions	X	X	X	X
(n) Working methods of the Statistical Commission				X
(o) Principles governing international statistical activities	X			
Total number of items	**25**	**27**	**21**	**18**

[a] The order of the agenda items is based on the order of items in the Classification of Statistics and Statistical Activities (document SA/2001/9 dated 16 August 2001, annex I) approved by the former Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities at its thirty-third session held from 14 to 16 September 1999 in Madrid.

Programme reviews

2003: Statistics of services

2004: Social statistics

2005: Energy statistics

2006: Industrial statistics

2007: Education statistics

2008: Employment statistics (proposed)